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7 OTHERS STILL MISSING

Bush says US is 'not going to rest content' until all hostages are released

Associated Press

WASHINGTON - The fate of seven kidnapped Americans remained unknown yesterday, with the Reagan administration saying it was "not going to rest content" until the seven, held in Lebanon for as long as 15 months, followed the hijack hostages to freedom.

Vice President George Bush said other countries whose citizens had been kidnapped in Beirut would be asked to join an international effort in behalf of those still held.

"The United States government is not going to give up, not going to rest content, until the seven and others are released too," Bush told CBS News.

"Other countries have hostages there," Bush said. "It isn't just a US problem."

He mentioned France as another country whose citizens were held in Beirut.

In addition to the missing Americans, four Frenchmen and a Briton have been kidnapped, and an Iranian photographer disappeared in Beirut Thursday as he covered the hijack crisis.

At the Air Force hospital in Wiesbaden, West Germany, seven US flags were added to the 39 flying in tribute to the people from the hijacked jetliner.

Amid the administration's massive effort to free the captives of TWA Flight 847, relatives of the earlier prisoners have complained that their loved ones are America's "forgotten hostages" for whom little has been done over the past few months.

Amal Shiite leaders in Beirut, who arranged the release of the hostages from Flight 847, have said they had nothing to do with the earlier kidnappings and could not release the seven.

Experts in congressional and diplomatic circles asserted, however, that Syrian President Hafez Assad, whose intervention brought about the release of the hijack captives, could devise a deal to free the seven.

"Assad could, if he wants to, expend the political capital and bring enough pressure to release them. The question is whether he will. I hope he does," said Sen. Pat Leahy (D-Vt.), vice chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence.

"It's not over until it's over," Leahy said on NBC's "Meet The Press." "There are seven people there. We should not forget about them."

Samuel Lewis, former US ambassador to Israel, said an Assad-sponsored effort in behalf of the seven would be hampered by his lack of direct control over the captors, believed to be a Shiite faction called Hezbollah, or Party of God.

"But the area they're in is certainly under the control of Syrian forces," Lewis said. "It's risky to try to get them out by military means. They could be killed in the process, but I believe that if Assad expends enough political pressure on Hezbollah, he'll get them."

Peggy Say, whose brother, Terry Anderson, was kidnapped by gunmen on a Beirut street on March 16, remained hopeful even after it was apparent that the hostage deal had failed to include her brother.

"They expected Terry to come out; somehow he was lost in the shuffle with the other six," she said. "But they know where he is. And they've been able to speak, apparently to his captors through whatever means."

Anderson, 37, is chief Middle East correspondent of the Associated Press.

The other captives are William Buckley, 56, a US Embassy political officer; Rev. Benjamin Weir, 61, a missionary; Peter Kilburn, 60, a librarian at the American University of Beirut; Rev. Lawrence Martin Jenco, 50, a Catholic relief official; David Jacobsen, 54, administrator of the American University Hospital; and Thomas Sutherland, acting dean of agriculture at the American University of Beirut.